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ABSTRACT

A project to improve the social skills of kindergarten children in a multicultural setting by a simple peace education program was implemented. Noting that kindergarten children did not exhibit good social skills and were not able to solve conflicts in a peaceful manner, the project was designed to incorporate and increase group problem solving, cooperative learning, peacemaking language skills, and parent participation. The results showed that 15 out of the 20 kindergarten students solved verbal conflicts peacefully, accepted others into their play, and collaborated and shared with each other. The results also indicated that involving the home, school, and the community in the peace education program resulted in opportunities for students to improve their social skills. Three appendices on student checklists for verbal solving of conflicts, acceptance of other children, and collaborating and sharing are included. Contains 23 references. (AP)

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ED 384 422

Improving the Social Skills of Kindergarten Students in their Multicultural Setting through a Peacemaking Program

by

Kathleen M. Leonard

Cluster 65, Wilmington

A Practicum I Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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December 23, 1994

This practicum report was submitted by Kathleen M. Leonard under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Jan. 26, 1995 _____

_____
June Delano, Ph.D., Adviser

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS iv

LIST OF TABLES v

ABSTRACT vi

Chapter

I INTRODUCTION 1

Description of the Community 1
Writer's Work Setting and Role 2

II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM 6

Problem Description 6
Problem Documentation 7
Causative Analysis 9
Relationship of the Problem to the Literature 11

III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS 15

Goals and Expectations 15
Outcomes and Measurement of Outcomes 15

IV SOLUTION STRATEGY 18

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions 18
Description of Selected Solutions 20
Report of Action Taken 23

V RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 30

Results 30
Discussion 33
Recommendations 37
Dissemination 37

REFERENCES 40

Appendices

A STUDENT CHECKLIST FOR VERBAL SOLVING OF CONFLICTS 43
B STUDENT CHECKLIST FOR ACCEPTANCE OF OTHER CHILDREN 44
C STUDENT CHECKLIST FOR COLLABORATING AND SHARING 45

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1 Student checklist for verbal solving of conflicts in a peaceful manner 31

2 Student checklist for acceptance of other children 32

3 Student checklist for collaborating and sharing 33

ABSTRACT

Improving the social skills of kindergarten students in their multicultural setting through a peacemaking program. Leonard, Kathleen M., 1995: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Multicultural Children's Literature/Diversity/Peer Relationships/Social Skills/Early Childhood Education/Prejudice.

This practicum was designed to improve the social skills of kindergarten children in their multicultural setting through a simple peace education program. The practicum was initiated due to the fact that kindergarten children did not exhibit good social skills and were not able to solve conflicts in a peaceful manner. The process of affirming group problem solving, cooperative learning, and the implementation of peacemaking language skills, were incorporated. This practicum also included parent participation, a Big Buddy program, a contribution to the community's food bank, and a culminating potluck brunch. A major component of this practicum has been the empowerment of the students to peacefully solve conflicts and exhibit good social skills in their multicultural setting.

The writer developed multiple solution strategies focusing on a simple peace education program for kindergarten children, thereby increasing students' social skills. The classroom was stocked with appropriate children's books that depicted a variety of peoples, cultures, lifestyles, and points of view. Cooperative learning strategies were implemented as a means to improve students' social skills. Learning the skills of peacemaking (Drew, 1987) provided specific lesson plans and activities for communicating, cooperating, and resolving conflict. Parents worked collaboratively with the writer sharing their cultures, customs, and ethnic foods in the classroom setting. A multicultural potluck dinner was hosted by the students for their families.

Analysis of the data revealed that involving the home, school, and the community in the peace education program resulted in opportunities for students to improve their social skills. The results indicated that 15 out of the 20 kindergarten students: (1) solved verbal conflicts peacefully, (2) accepted others into their play, and (3) collaborated and shared with each other.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Community

The school district in which the writer was employed was located in a rapidly growing municipality ten miles inland from the seashore and was one of the largest townships within the state, geographically. The district was located in the southern region of the state. It measured 92.3 square miles. The township was dissected by a main transportation artery to the Northeast. The township was comprised of seven small towns. Most of the population growth had been in the east section of the township. Although western sections of the district had also experienced growth, it still remained rural with land used primarily for farming. Low cost housing units, townhouses, and single family home developments were found in the eastern section of the township.

The population of the township was 25,000. Since 1988, the population had shown a dramatic increase. This influx of people to the

community had been caused by the growth in the casino industry and other services which were related.

The composition of the community was basically multiculturally diverse in the eastern area of the township. The western side of the township was white with the exception of an Afro American settlement within its boundaries.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The school district in that growing community was comprised of six elementary schools, K-6, and one middle school. Since 1988, three new elementary schools had been added to the system because of continuing crowded conditions. The total school district population was 3,200. There was a total of 19 kindergarten classes in the district. There was a kindergarten population of 437.

The ethnic composition of the student body was 77% white, 12% black, 4% Hispanic, and 7% Asian. As seen by these figures, there was a growing group of multiculturally diverse students, and the school community strived to be sensitive to the needs and concerns of these youngsters.

At the writer's elementary school, there were six developmentally

appropriate kindergarten classes and a kindergarten population of 138. The kindergarten program was an all day program in design. A child's school day began at 9:00 a.m. and concluded at 2:30 p.m. The kindergarten students that attended the writer's school were also privy to a before and after school childcare program that was housed in the school cafeteria.

Each kindergarten class was self-contained and heterogeneously grouped. This practicum took place in the writer's kindergarten class with an enrollment of 20 students.

The staff at the writer's work site consisted of two administrators and a teaching staff of 66. Two clerical personnel, six food service people, and three custodial and maintenance workers comprised the support staff.

The general socioeconomic status of the parents of the students in this elementary school was middle class with a balance between middle and lower classes. Parents' employment ranged from professionals, blue collar workers and others on welfare assistance.

In general, the writer was fortunate to be in a work setting which had concerned administrators that worked with the faculty. Adequate equipment and supplies were available, and there was a high quality of

dedication shared by the faculty.

All instructional staff were required to hold a Bachelor's degree and a valid state teaching certificate. The estimated average teaching experience of the educators was eight years. One staff member was working on a Doctorate degree.

The writer was a kindergarten teacher and unit leader in this elementary school setting. The writer was certified to teach grades kindergarten through eighth. The writer had earned a Master's of Arts degree in elementary education, and was also certified as a supervisor for grades kindergarten through 12. For over 18 years, the writer had been actively involved in the education of young children.

The writer was responsible for teaching 20 kindergarten students in an all day developmentally appropriate program. As a unit leader, the writer's role was one of facilitating weekly meetings with other kindergarten teachers, organizing and arranging all unit activities, field trips, and programs, as well as writing kindergarten newsletters.

The writer's participation in evaluating the need for an all day kindergarten program resulted in the district's adoption and successful implementation of such a program in 1988. The writer remained active in

various national, state and local organizations that focused their efforts on the issues of the young child. The writer also spoke at local parent groups and had presented workshops for kindergarten teachers.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

A definite problem had risen. Kindergarten students did not exhibit good social skills in their multicultural setting. Specifically, the students resorted to aggressive behavior or excluded other peers from joining into their play group. Since 1988, the school community had experienced a growth of student population. This influx had resulted in an increase in student diversity. The writer's school population contained a complex mix of races, cultures, languages and religious affiliations. Because of a lack of knowledge of different ethnic cultures, students were having difficulty communicating in a positive manner. They were unable to peacefully play and work together. The students were also unable to share and cooperate in a small group setting.

Since kindergarten is the child's first formal school experience, some of the students were experiencing cultural diversity for the first time.

Unfortunately, they did not know how to communicate with peers on their own. These young children typically ignored, disrupted, or directed social aggression toward other children. The students also made racial slurs toward peers of a different color. This problem had not been solved because the present kindergarten curriculum did not incorporate the teaching of social skills for a multiculturally diverse student population. The kindergarten curriculum did not focus on or take into account the likenesses and similarities of all people. The problems were escalating and preventing students from developing positive social skills in kindergarten and an appreciation of multicultural differences.

Briefly stated, the problem in the writer's work site was the fact that kindergarten children did not exhibit good social skills in a multicultural setting. The students did not enjoy one another and did not see the thread of commonality that exists in all people.

Problem Documentation

The writer had proved the problem was real. A survey was designed by the writer and administered to the six kindergarten teachers. Using a scale of always, sometimes, or never, the majority of the teachers' responses to the survey indicated that kindergarten children did not exhibit

good social skills in their multicultural setting. For the first statement concerning student conflicts, three of the six kindergarten teachers responded that kindergarten children were never able to peacefully solve conflicts, thus exhibiting physical aggressiveness toward each other, and the other three teachers responded that students "sometimes" were able to solve conflicts peacefully. Many times, kindergarten students did not have the language skills necessary for positive interaction. For the statement regarding peer exclusion, four the six teachers surveyed indicated that sometimes kindergarten children would exclude peers from joining into their play group, and two teachers recorded "never" observing kindergarten children excluding peers. Six of the six kindergarten teachers surveyed indicated that sometimes kindergarten children did not share and exhibited selfish behavior.

Another form of documentation was the writer's observation of the students. The writer concluded from 18 years of teaching that kindergarten students preferred working with their own ethnic peers when placed in a collaborative learning group. The writer had observed children's use of racial slurs when referring to other ethnic groups, thus mimicking adult language. The writer also observed that students did not know how to

work together in a collaborative group setting. They resorted to physical aggression to settle a conflict.

Causative Analysis

The writer saw a variety of causes of why kindergarten children did not exhibit good social skills in a multicultural setting. Because these causes were so varied, each student could be deficient in more than one area that lead to inadequate social skills. One cause was that kindergarten students had a poor self concept. A low self concept is related to poor mental health, poor academic achievement and delinquency. A second cause was that kindergarten students were, for the first time, encountering others of different community cultures. On the eastern side of the writer's district, single family homes, apartment complexes, and low income housing units comprised many multiculturally diverse neighborhoods. On the western end of the township, a rural farming area community and an Afro American community was within its boundaries. The kindergarten children from these two diverse areas of the township were bused into the writer's school system and integrated into the six kindergarten classes. Thirdly, kindergarten children had not been taught, nor could they learn on their own, how to resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner. The most difficult

learning challenges of the early years were for children to get along with each other, to solve problems with words instead of fists or feet, and to cooperate with a variety of people. A fourth cause was that kindergarten children lived in communities where prejudice was modeled by adults and older children. Children picked up their cues about how to behave by watching and listening to people around them. Socially, the community was experiencing racial problems between various ethnic groups. Confrontations involving racial fights with police had resulted. Again, the children were victims of these ethnic problems. As a result of that occurrence in the community, young children mimicked adult behavior.

Two additional causes of the lack of social skills were the facts that students were not able to recognize or see likenesses among people, and young children were naturally egocentric and needed to be taught the commonality of all people.

The last cause of the problem was the fact that kindergarten students did not have adequate oral and receptive language skills to communicate effectively. Although kindergarten children could often distinguish between emotions, many did not have the language to describe the more complex emotions. Expressing those feelings required taking a

risk, and many students found that risk not worth taking when they did not feel safe in the classroom.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Other professionals had written about social problems in a culturally diverse setting. To begin with, Gough (1993) had written that the "Browning of America" was pushing education to apprehend two facts: that ignoring cultural differences could inhibit students' learning, and that failing to teach children to respect people who were different from themselves did not forbode well for the nation's future. Although multicultural education remained a controversial issue, it was a movement to become knowledgeable, caring, and active citizens in a deeply troubled and ethnically polarized nation and world. Banks' (1989) claim that multicultural education was only for people of color was a misconception.

Support for the problem was provided by a variety of sources. Banks (1993) stated that by the age of four, African American, white and Mexican children were aware of racial differences and showed racial preferences favoring white children. However, Soto (1993) found that while young children noticed and had even expressed the biases of adults around them, they did not form strong prejudices or develop the

stereotypes that permeated popular cultures. This research indicated that while the influence of the family on children's psychological and social development is great, education, too, plays a key role in shaping children's attitudes. However, predominately white schools and districts did not have a plan for multicultural education because they had few African American, Hispanic, or Asian American students. When educators viewed multicultural education as the study of the "others", it became marginalized and held apart from mainstream education reform (Banks, 1989). As our population became more diverse, there was an alarming increase in acts of overt racism. The number and size of hate groups in the U. S. was rising. Too many segments of the white American population remained committed to the position of dominance; they were willing to defend it and legitimize it, even in the face of evidence that the world was rapidly changing (Hacker, 1992).

Winfield (1986) suggested that how teachers think about education and students made a profound difference in student performance and achievement. Winfield found that teachers expected more from white students than from African American students, and they expected more from middle class students than from working and lower class students.

Teachers often perceived that African American students or students from lower class backgrounds were incapable of high quality academic work. Teachers were not attributing their problems with students of color to ineffective teaching approaches. Johnson (1993) concluded that the classroom placed students in competition with each other and offered few opportunities to learn strategies needed to participate in groups. Rothman (1992) concurred that teachers and students often did feel disconnected by differences in race and class. Leo and Gray (1991) perpetuated the idea that multicultural education was the study of the "other" by defining it as synonymous with Afrocentric education. According to Taba (1952), "only when education reform related to diversity is viewed as essential for all students, will it have a chance of becoming institutionalized in the nation's schools."

Many children whose cultural values and identities were strongly rooted in their traditional ethnic heritage experienced alienation and isolation in schools. This disaffection was often manifested in situations of classroom management, conflicting expectations about school behaviors, lack of interest in instructional activities, and low level academic performance. Routinely, the media increasingly portrayed poverty and

violence as a condition of race. There was ample evidence that young people were internalizing these views. As Banks' (1993) comprehensive literature review pointed out, children were aware of their race and ethnicity at an early age. Banks concluded that all children could be helped to develop more positive racial attitudes.

Children were growing up in a world in which people from many different cultures lived and worked together. Unfortunately some children did not learn how to communicate positively with peers on their own. In the classroom, these children typically ignored, disrupted, or directed social aggression toward other children. Some young children also made racial slurs toward peers of a different color. Dealing with angry, aggressive children was a challenge for all teachers.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this practicum experience was to have kindergarten students exhibit good social skills in their multicultural setting. An expectation of the writer was that children in a multicultural kindergarten would learn to enjoy each other and begin to see the similarities that exist among all people. The writer's last expectation was that kindergarten children in a multicultural setting would learn to communicate more effectively using their improved oral and receptive language skills.

Outcomes and Measurement of Outcomes

The writer identified the following outcomes:

Outcome 1: Fifteen out of 20 kindergarten students will solve verbal conflicts in a peaceful manner. During a two week time frame, the writer will observe and record for 15 minutes per day students' verbal dialogues. The writer's observation of the types of student conversations

during structured, semi-structured, and unstructured activities will be recorded on a writer made checklist (see Appendix A). The writer will tally the number of times each student will use an inappropriate comment and resort to physical aggressiveness. The standard of achievement will be that for each day for a two week period, the writer will record three peaceful comments made by the students.

Outcome 2: Fifteen out of 20 kindergarten students will accept other children into their play. During a two week time frame, the writer will observe and record for 15 minutes per day the incidents of students refusing or avoiding physical contact with others. The writer's observation of the physical interactions between children during structured, semi-structured, and unstructured activities will be recorded on a writer made checklist (see Appendix B). The writer will tally the number of times students reject others. The standard of achievement will be that for each day for a two week period, the writer will record three or more peaceful physical interactions.

Outcome 3: Fifteen out of 20 students will collaborate and share with each other. During a two week time frame, the writer will observe and record for 15 minutes per day students using collaborative and sharing

skills. The writer's observation of the collaborative and sharing skills demonstrated by students during structured, semi-structured, and unstructured activities will be recorded on a writer made checklist (see Appendix C). The writer will tally the number of students refusing to collaborate or share. The standard of achievement will be that for each day for a two week period, the writer will record three collaborative and sharing skills demonstrated by the students.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

Kindergarten students did not exhibit good social skills in their multicultural environment. Specifically, the students resorted to aggressive behavior or excluded others from joining into their play group. Students were having difficulty communicating in a positive manner. They were unable to peacefully play and work together. The students were also unable to share and cooperate in a small group setting.

A synopsis of the literature revealed insight into this problem and suggested some solutions. Cooperative learning is a technique that can help teachers maneuver children into groups that are racially and culturally balanced so that children can become more accustomed to working together because they share a common goal (Slavin, 1990). Johnson (1993) focused on teaching young children social skills such as the need for rules, authority, individual rights, respect for others, cooperation, following

directions, and responsibility. Drew (1987) also suggested that teaching the skills of peacemaking at the earliest level would foster friendship and cooperation.

Banks (1989) stated that ethnic lifestyles should be reflected in all curriculum areas. Educators must implement a teaching/learning environment that affects, positively, how children feel about school, about being culturally different in a predominately Anglo-American school, and about genuine feelings of acceptance and caring. Baruth and Manning (1992) concurred that for centuries, teachers stressed the common bond of humanity, that people were more similar than different.

Because children are growing up in a world in which people from many different cultures live and work together, Wittmer (1993) stated that early childhood was the best time to begin to prepare children for this world by helping them learn in positive ways about differences in language, appearance, customs, and abilities. This understanding helped children build an appreciation of others and supported social and communication skills that would be important to them in later life. It also gave children the opportunity to see how people could be different and similar at the same time.

The development of positive social skills is important during early childhood because these skills form the foundation for positive peer relationships and friendships in later life. Children acquire a wide range of competencies during peer interactions, including resolution of conflicts, sharing play materials, enacting dramatic play roles, and displaying or responding to social affection (Hartup, 1983). Peer interactions also enable children to acquire and practice pivotal language skills.

To some extent, differences among people were considered to be "deficits". The common belief was that differences which varied from middle class norms or expectations were wrong or inferior and should be remediated. Today, differences among children should be considered entities to be appreciated and on which educational experiences could be built. Children's literature could be a vehicle for fostering such cultural awareness and appreciation (Rasinski and Padak, 1990).

Description of Selected Solutions

The writer generated some ideas as possible solutions which were a result of reviewing the literature. The writer used children's literature as a powerful way for kindergarten children to learn to appreciate other cultures. The writer used cooperative learning strategies to develop

prosocial values and encouraged parent involvement in the classroom. The kindergarten students also had opportunities to discuss, share and to problem solve (floor time, show and tell). Greenspan's (1993) suggested idea of floor time was utilized by the writer. The writer incorporated ethnic foods (cooking experiences) to promote a greater appreciation and respect for other ethnic groups. The writer taught kindergarten students peacemaking skills, focused on the concept of interdependence and how we are alike. The writer and the students explored the neighborhood to help children make sense of the world and their place in it.

The writer implemented all of the solutions in a simple peace education program for kindergarten students in a multicultural classroom. The writer had access to multicultural literature. Cognitive, social and personal benefits accrued to children who interact with literature (Cullinan, 1987). The classroom was stacked with appropriate children's books that depicted a variety of peoples, cultures, lifestyles, and points of views. Children's literature was a vehicle for fostering cultural awareness and appreciation (Rasinski and Padak, 1990). Books of many cultures helped students broaden their knowledge of the world and learn more about true values in the process (Van Ausdall, 1994). Harris (1991) stated that

educators must strive to offer all children the opportunity to see themselves in their books and to learn to love the individuals they see.

The writer pursued the necessary training in cooperative learning strategies and effectively incorporated the use of cooperative learning strategies as a means to improve students' social skills. Social skills are directly related to building and maintaining positive relationships and to keeping psychological health. When teachers encouraged social skills in their classrooms they also increased a student's employability, career success, quality of future relationships, and psychological health (Johnson and Johnson, 1989/90).

The writer investigated peacemaking materials suitable for kindergarten children in a multicultural setting. The program Learning the skills of peacemaking (Drew, 1987), provided specific lesson plans and activities for communicating, cooperating, and resolving conflict. The children became truly self-disciplined by becoming skilled decision makers. The same thinking skills used in this peacemaking process applied to real life encounters as well.

Bredekamp (1987) stated that schools that value children are schools that value their families. Together teachers and families can

support children's self-esteem and success. Parents were integrated into the designs of the peace education program in order to maximize student growth. This added support also promoted positive student attitudes toward learning.

Report of Action Taken

In the beginning, sitting in a "peace ring" (the morning circle time renamed), students had the opportunity for airing differences, resolving problems, and working together cooperatively. The sense of the class as a unit emerged out of this kind of participation. The students learned the guidelines for sharing and began to understand that peace meant, in part, feeling good about themselves. A parent letter informing parents of the set of rules which the class agreed on to follow was sent home. This was an invitation for parents to become partners in the goal of creating a peaceful world.

Parents' enthusiasm became evident during the early implementation stages. A few parents wrote the writer notes asking for more information. Later, parents informed the writer that they were reinforcing the same peace rules in their family's lives. Several parents even had the opportunity to participate in the peace ring when the children

were learning the process of affirming. This affirmation of others created an atmosphere of acceptance that is crucial to peacemaking.

The parents worked collaboratively with the writer sharing their cultures, customs, and ethnic foods in the classroom setting. The creation of a family book, an ethnic cookbook, and a video depicting family life was developed by the parents and students in the writer's classroom. A multicultural potluck dinner was hosted by the students for their families. The peacemaking program the writer chose had an immediate impact on the lives of the 20 kindergarten children involved.

Role playing, reflective listening, and creative brainstorming solutions to conflicts were incorporated into the peace ring. Group problem solving through play helped the students deal with conflict when it arose. The skills of sharing and listening were reinforced daily as was practicing peacemaking language through puppetry and drama. Improving positive self-esteem was ongoing throughout the practicum. The children especially enjoyed telling the "I care" kitty puppet about what they were good at doing. This activity was often repeated during the practicum experience, and the writer taped the children's responses. This recording was used at the listening center for enjoyment. The writer also recorded

the students affirming each other. The children often requested the writer to play this taped conversation during rest time. In the beginning, saying something nice about another person (affirming) was difficult for the students; but after a few weeks of participation in the peacemaking program, positive comments about each other were stated by the students. The writer reported hearing such positive remarks during structured, semi-structured, and unstructured activities.

Journal writing was also ongoing. Feelings, thoughts, and responses were expressed through this activity. The journal was shared with the parents at conference time. The children also had an opportunity to share and write stories in a cooperative learning setting.

While focusing on learning about people's basic needs, the children discovered that their help was needed outside of the school community. A resourceful activity emerged from a peace ring discussion. A student discussed seeing a homeless person in the neighborhood. From that initial discussion, the children planned a food drive to help resolve a real problem that existed in the community. The writer extended an invitation for all of the kindergarten classes to participate in the food drive and received positive responses. The writer reported that the academic focus of the

food drive resulted in the children not only learning about the importance of food to maintain a healthy mind and body but also learning to classify foods according to the four basic food groups.

Although the Big Buddy program, wherein the district's eighth grade learning disabled students were invited to the writer's classroom on a monthly basis to work and play cooperatively with the kindergarten students had only met twice during the practicum experience, it will continue for the entire school year. The writer observed that the paired students enjoying working together. Completion of a year-long journal, monthly video review, and a picnic are several culminating activities the writer has planned at this time.

The final impact of the practicum experience occurred when the children celebrated the acceptance of differences in others by hosting a potluck family brunch. Originally, the writer had planned a dinner; but due to scheduling conflicts, a brunch in the morning was more feasible. It was at this time that the writer was able to report an increased interest of parents' participation in the practicum experience. All of the parents of the 20 kindergarten students participated in the potluck brunch which not only featured many delicious ethnic dishes but also foods representing all

the letters in the alphabet from the letter A to the letter Z. A big buffet table was set up in the hallway, and the writer's students and their families ate and enjoyed the wonderful and varied selections of ethnic foods in the classroom. However, the writer logged that in the planning sessions, several students commented during a peace ring discussion that they wanted to invite their friends from the other four kindergarten classes in the writer's school to the potluck brunch. The students created and wrote the invitations to the other classes and also included the school principal, vice principal, janitor, and two secretaries on the guest list. Because the buffet tables were arranged in the hallway and the amount of food was plentiful, everyone had a taste of all the goodies.

The writer's kindergarten classroom was a legitimate arena for engaging the 20 students in the process of peacemaking. The writer taught peacemaking skills twice a week through classroom discussion, playacting, creative writing, story reading and music, and the arts. All materials and supplies were readily available in the classroom. The concepts and values in each lesson were woven into the students' daily interactions. For example, some of the imagery lessons were done first thing in the morning to set the tone of the day. The conflict resolution guidelines were applied

whenever a stressful situation arose. The writer showcased conflict situations as they occurred, mediating them through the use of the win/win guidelines and engaged the entire class into problem solving by using the floor time strategy (Greenspan, 1993).

During the 12 week practicum experience, daily story time focused on ethnic diversity. The writer collected appropriate multicultural children's literature and planned a study of folk literature in the fall. Folk literature was an enjoyable way for children to develop an appreciation for individual differences. Through folktales, children experienced other cultures and understood the diversity of the wishes, dreams and problems of people around the world.

Included in the practicum experience, the writer's kindergarten students also participated in cooperative learning strategies as a means to improve students' social skills. When teachers encouraged social skills in their classrooms, they also increased a student's employability, career success, quality of future relationships, and psychological health (Johnson and Johnson, 1989/90).

This practicum process began the third week of September. Sitting in morning circle time, the writer and students established the rules for the

first class meeting. The goal of this meeting was to improve the atmosphere in the class. Class meetings provided the opportunity for airing differences, resolving problems, and working together cooperatively. The children enjoyed being included in the decision making process. The sense of the class as a unit also emerged out of this kind of participation. The kindergarten students listed qualities of a peaceful classroom and this participation created the setting for a peaceful classroom. As a result of this class meeting, a peaceful classroom mural was originated by the children in cooperative learning groups.

The successful steps taken to improve the social skills of kindergarten students in their multicultural setting through a peacemaking program required the writer to spend many hours on the organization and preparation of the many activities and projects planned for the students. If the reader is to successfully duplicate this peacemaking program, the reader must be prepared to spend the additional time needed on the planning and organizing of materials and activities needed in order to achieve successful implementation.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The problem which was solved through this practicum was that kindergarten students did not exhibit good social skills in their multicultural setting. Specifically, the students resorted to aggressive behavior or excluded other peers from joining into their play group. The strategies chosen by this writer to solve this problem focused on a peace-making program for kindergarten students in a multicultural classroom. The writer incorporated cooperative learning and collaborated with parents and community members. To expand the learning opportunities outside the classroom, parents were provided with a copy of the children's peace rules to reinforce at home.

The measurement of outcomes were as follows:

Outcome 1: Fifteen out of 20 kindergarten students will solve verbal conflicts in a peaceful manner. During a two week period as the

practicum concluded, the writer's observation of the types of student conversations during structured, semi-structured, and unstructured activities were recorded on a writer made checklist. The writer tallied the number of times each student used an inappropriate comment and resorted to physical aggressiveness. The writer observed and recorded only three students making inappropriate comments and resorting to physical aggressiveness toward each other. The writer heard conflict resolution language skills being modeled by the students in semi-structured and unstructured situations. Objective one was achieved. Table 1 summarizes the results of the evaluation checklist used during a two week time frame.

Table 1

Student checklist for verbal solving of conflicts in a peaceful manner.

Number of students using inappropriate comments and resorting to physical aggressiveness.	Structured	Semi-structured	Unstructured
Week one	2	3	3
Week two	2	3	3

Outcome 2: Fifteen out of 20 kindergarten students will accept other children into their play. In a two week time frame, the writer's observation of the physical interactions between children during structured,

semi-structured, and unstructured activities were recorded on a writer made checklist. The writer tallied the number of times students rejected others. The writer reported that all of the 20 kindergarten students accepted other children into their play in a structured situation. The writer observed 19 of the 20 kindergarten students accepting others into their play in an unstructured activity, and 18 of the 20 kindergarten students accepted others in semi-structured situations. More importantly, other teachers observed a marked increase in the positive physical interactions of the writer's students during unstructured situations. Outcome two was achieved. Table 2 summarizes the results of the evaluation checklist used during a two week time frame.

Table 2

Student checklist for acceptance of other children.

Number of students accepting others into their play.	Structured	Semi-structured	Unstructured
Week one	20	18	19
Week two	20	18	19

Outcome 3: Fifteen out of 20 students will collaborate and share with each other. The results of the writer's observation of the collaborative and sharing skills in a two week time frame demonstrated by the students

during structured, semi-structured, and unstructured activities indicated that students were practicing the process of affirming and using the peacemaking language when a conflict arose. All 20 kindergarten students were observed using such skills in structured and semi-structured situations, and only three students were observed not collaborating or sharing in an unstructured situation. Outcome three was achieved. Table 3 summarizes the results of the evaluation checklist used during a two week time frame.

Table 3

Student checklist for collaborating and sharing.

Number of students refusing to collaborate and share.	Structured	Semi-structured	Unstructured
Week one	0	0	3
Week two	0	0	3

The overwhelming impression was one of positiveness for the entire program.

Discussion

The specific outcomes which the writer planned to achieve were met through the implementation of this practicum. The goal of this practicum was to have kindergarten students exhibit good social skills in their multicultural setting. The children in a multicultural kindergarten learned

to peacefully play and work together. The kindergarten children in a multicultural setting learned to communicate more effectively using their improved oral and receptive language skills.

The results of the writer's recorded observations of student performance of good social skills was analyzed through the data. The results were shared with other kindergarten teachers, the principal, and the guidance counselor in the writer's school. The data revealed that conflict resolution language skills were now being modeled by the kindergarten students in structured, semi-structured, and unstructured situations. Students were collaborating and sharing in structured, semi-structured, and unstructured situations. The students also learned to accept others into their play in structured, semi-structured, and unstructured situations.

The essential component for the success of the program was the increasing number of students who demonstrated good social skills, especially in semi-structured and in unstructured activities. Wittmer (1993) reminds educational leaders that early childhood is the best time to begin to prepare children for this world by helping them learn in positive ways about differences in language, appearance, customs, and abilities. This understanding helps children build an appreciation of others and supports

social and communication skills that will be important to them in later life. It also gives children the opportunity to see how people can be different and similar at the same time.

At the beginning of implementation, the writer initiated cooperative learning strategies to improve student's social skills. Johnson and Johnson (1989/90) explain that when teachers encourage social skills in their classroom, they also increase a student's employability, career success, quality of future relationships, and psychological health. Using the suggestion offered by Drew (1987) that teaching the skills of peacemaking at the earliest level will foster friendship and cooperation, the writer taught peacemaking skills and strategies suitable for kindergarten children in a multicultural setting. Bredekamp (1987) states that schools that value children are schools that value their families. Together, teachers and children can support children's self-esteem and success. That, in turn, was one of the critical components contributing to the success of this practicum. Because the writer integrated parents into the designs of the peace education program at the beginning of implementation, the parents' support and reinforcement promoted the students to develop positive social skills and attitudes. Harris (1991) states that educators must strive to offer

all children the opportunity to see themselves in their books and to learn to love the individuals they see. The use of children's literature and the development of a multicultural library in the classroom was a powerful way for kindergarten children to appreciate other cultures. The writer read to the students from this selection every day.

The peacemaking strategies implemented in this practicum were rooted in the program Learning the skills of peacemaking (Drew, 1987). This program provided specific lesson plans and activities for communicating, cooperating, and resolving conflict. First, the students learned to work and play cooperatively and have a respect for the interdependence of all living things. The students learned to accept and enjoy the commonalities and celebrated the differences. Next, the writer nurtured the sensitivity of children, encouraged the children to accept and express their feelings and to empathize with the feelings of others. Sharing experiences in the writer's secure classroom environment let the children know that all their emotions, good and bad, were important. Lastly, Greenspan's (1993) recommendation of floor time to "showcase" conflict situations as they occur, mediating them through the use of the win/win guidelines was effective. Children were taught skills to deal constructively

with conflicts. Because conflict was channeled into positive action, the conflict stimulated creativity and problem solving ability.

As a result of this implementation, these children were able to exhibit good social skills in their multicultural setting. The children also enjoyed each other and began to see similarities that exist among all people in a multicultural setting. The writer had chosen this peace education program as an approach to a complex topic.

Recommendations

The writer has three recommendations for the reader when duplicating this practicum.

1. This peacemaking program should be expanded and integrated throughout the year.

2. Provide dolls of different race and gender for the classroom so that children will acknowledge and accept our likenesses and differences in their play.

3. Include a class field trip to the community's police department.

Dissemination

The results of this practicum have been disseminated using a variety of procedures. The project outcomes were presented at the local level

during a school faculty meeting where all staff members were informed by the writer at that time. The writer also wrote a synopsis of the project outcomes, and this was printed in the school parent newsletter. The school district's newspaper, which will be sent to all residents in the community, will also publish the writer's practicum report outcomes. Further plans to disseminate the results of this practicum include the kindergarten class writing a letter to the township police department and township's officials to inform them of the efforts of the class to peacefully solve conflicts. The writer also anticipates making a board of education presentation on the practicum experience at the next board of education meeting. Finally, the writer plans to publish a follow-up presentation in the spring to share the video clip of the Big Buddy program and the successes of the practicum captured as recorded in the writer's practicum log. The published log will be given to the other kindergarten teachers in the writer's district. The writer will also share this log at the spring meeting of the county's association of kindergarten teachers.

The kindergarten classroom became a legitimate arena for engaging children in the process of peacemaking. The writer created a safe learning environment that allowed young students to express their concerns and to

resolve problems in a peaceful manner. The kindergarten students learned peacemaking techniques that fostered self-respect, respect for others, and effective communication.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT CHECKLIST FOR VERBAL SOLVING OF CONFLICTS

STUDENT CHECKLIST FOR VERBAL SOLVING OF CONFLICTS

	Week #1															Week #2														
	M			T			W			T			F			M			T			W			T			F			
Outcomes	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	Total
15 out of 20 kindergarten students will solve verbal conflicts in a peaceful manner.																														
A.																														
B.																														
C.																														
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S = Structured
SS = Semi-structured
U = Unstructured

APPENDIX B

STUDENT CHECKLIST FOR ACCEPTANCE OF OTHER CHILDREN

STUDENT CHECKLIST FOR ACCEPTANCE OF OTHER CHILDREN

	Week #1															Week #2															
	M			T			W			T			F			M			T			W			T			F			
Outcomes	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	Total
15 out of 20 kindergarten students will accept other children into their play.																															
A.																															
B.																															
C.																															
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Q.																															
R.																															
S.																															
T.																															

S = Structured
SS = Semi-structured
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APPENDIX C

STUDENT CHECKLIST FOR COLLABORATING AND SHARING

STUDENT CHECKLIST FOR COLLABORATING AND SHARING

	Week #1															Week #2														
	M			T			W			T			F			M			T			W			T			F			
Outcomes	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	S	SS	U	Total
15 out of 20 kindergarten students will collaborate and share with each other.																														
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